

ILLUSTRATIVE TEACHING

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# ILLUSTRATIVE TEACHING;

OR,

## PRACTICAL HINTS

TO SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

ON THE

Collection and Use of Illustrations.

BY

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# ILLUSTRATIVE TEACHING.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ILLUSTRATION—ITS NATURE AND INFLUENCE.

ONE of the most encouraging signs of the times, in connection with the religious education of the young, is the increased anxiety manifested by Sunday school teachers to attain a higher degree of efficiency in the discharge of their important and responsible duties. The conviction is spreading, that if young people are to be retained beneath the hallowed influence of the Sunday school, in the midst of so many inducements to spend the Lord's day in frivolous or sinful amusements, Divine truth must be expounded and enforced by the teacher with a power and attractiveness which, to say the least, are not ordinarily displayed.

The vast importance of *illustration* as a means of investing doctrinal truth with an interest which, in its abstract form, it may not seem to possess, is daily becoming more fully recognized. Many young persons are desirous of adopting the illustrative mode of teaching; and the inquiry is often proposed—"How can I learn to illustrate with skill and success?" To such the following hints are offered, in the hope that they may aid the earnest teacher in cultivating those methods of religious instruction which are best calculated, under the Divine blessing, to win the youthful heart to the love of sacred truth.

By "illustrative teaching," we understand the employment of particular facts or incidents, in the different forms of anecdote, simile, proverb, or parable, for the purpose of explaining or enforcing certain doctrines or principles.

The degree in which public teachers are indebted for their popularity to illustration, is perhaps even greater than is generally imagined. Both written and oral teaching are to a large extent dependent on illustration for any attractions which they may possess. Let us adduce two or three instances.

The spell which binds the reader to the charmed pages of Macaulay is derived mainly

from illustration. To this fact the Rev. Dr. Angus, in a lecture delivered before the members of the Sunday School Union Library and Reading Room, made reference in the following terms:—

After characterizing his lordship's "Essays" as "the most perfect specimens of artistic skill which our language contains," the Doctor added, "Rightly to study them is really to learn the secret of their success. If I could do for a Sunday school what Macaulay has done for the wide world, I should become as effective as he; and though the rules of his art are not at first apparent, there are rules, and my business is to get at them, and to turn them to my own purposes. You notice, for example, in his paragraphs, he scarcely ever states a truth in an abstract form; or if he does, it is but once, and the abstract statement is beset all round with endless *illustrations*. Everything is concrete, individualized, personal. He never speaks, for example, of the practice of the Puritans in adhering so closely to scriptural names, without saying that they called their children Ephraim, or Manasseh. In other words, he does not mark the practice abstractedly, but *illustrates* it by particular cases."

The popularity of great preachers is likewise

largely attributable to their powers of illustration. Latimer, Whitefield, and Chalmers, in former times, and Mr. Spurgeon, in the present day, are remarkable instances.

Of Latimer it has been said,—“He owed not a little of his power to the use he made of *anecdote* and *incident*. He was like a master, converting the Scriptures themselves into a pictorial story-book for his children, and studying it with them. Sometimes his preaching consisted very much in personal recollections and experiences, with accounts of the dealings of God with individual consciences; so that some of the most interesting notices of the English Reformation are now to be derived from his sermons.”

Whitefield's marvellous power in the pulpit is traceable, in a great measure, to his skill in the relation and application of *anecdotes*. On one occasion, Dr. Lathrop, an American clergyman, related to Mr. Whitefield an occurrence which he thought would interest him, displaying, however, but little feeling as he told the story. On the same day the great preacher introduced the anecdote into his sermon, and Dr. Lathrop, as he heard it, found himself weeping like a child.

One of Dr. Chalmers's discourses is thus de-

scribed:—"Chalmers began in his usual unpromising way, by stating a few nearly self-evident propositions, neither in the choicest language, nor in the most impressive voice. . . . Chalmers went on. . . . He got into the mass of his subject; his weakness became strength; his hesitation was turned into energy, and, bringing the whole volume of his mind to bear upon it, he poured forth a current of the most close and conclusive arguments, brilliant with all the exuberance of an imagination which ranged over all nature for *illustrations*, and yet managed and applied each of them with the same unerring dexterity, as if that single one had been the study of a whole life."

A critical examination of one of Mr. Spurgeon's discourses would probably lead to the conclusion that its attractiveness was due chiefly to its varied and appropriate illustrations,—anecdotes, similes, metaphors, and poetic quotations.

The value of illustration is manifested on the platform as well as in the pulpit. The reader's own observation will probably furnish numerous examples. Let him call to mind the speeches which elicited the loudest applause at the last public meeting he attended, and he

will find that skilful illustration was to a large extent the source of the influence exerted by the orators.

Dr. Cheever, in speaking of the use of anecdotes, makes the following remark :—" Every one must have observed the effect of such lights and illustrations upon an audience. The whole assembly may have appeared up to that point uninterested, listless, even oppressed with stupor. But the moment the preacher says, ' I will illustrate this point by a relation of what took place in the life of such or such a person,' an entire change comes on the whole congregation. Every countenance is lighted up with expectation, every mind is on the alert, every ear is open and attentive." This remark is equally true in reference to other kinds of illustration, not strictly anecdotal.

On the other hand, it is chiefly the *absence of illustration* which renders a style heavy and uninteresting, and imparts that peculiar but well known quality denominated "*prosiness*." " What he says is extremely good," we are frequently told, " but, oh ! he is so prosy." This prosiness will be found to arise from the partial or entire absence of illustrative matter.

But whence, it may well be asked, does this

attractive power of illustration arise? Where lies the secret of its influence? It is based, we reply, upon two simple principles, familiar to all who have studied the faculties and dispositions of the human mind. The first is, that, *to an ordinary mind, truth in an abstract or general form is distasteful, but in a concrete or particular form, agreeable.* The second is, that *the mind delights in analogies.*

From these two facts the value and importance of illustration arise. With regard to the first, when an illustration is employed, the concrete is brought forward to exemplify the abstract—the particular case to explain or enforce the general principle. Abstract doctrine is thus made to shine with the borrowed light of illustrative fact, by which its beauty is enhanced, and its real nature more clearly made known. And as to the second, it is clear that an analogy must in every case be drawn between the illustrative fact and the doctrine illustrated, which analogy it is the duty of the teacher to place before the mind of the pupil.

By the employment of illustrations, therefore, the love of the concrete and the love of analogies are alike gratified. Hence their attractiveness.

The principles and influence of illustration

having thus been glanced at, its application to Sunday school instruction must next engage our thoughts.

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## CHAPTER II.

### ILLUSTRATION IN SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHING.

WE have seen that the value and importance of illustration, in oral and written instruction, arise from two characteristics of the human mind,—viz., the love of the concrete and particular, and the love of analogies.

Now it is unquestionably true that the above predilections are peculiarly strong in the season of *youth*. Children have a passion for details, and revel in analogies. Mark their fondness for *stories*, however frivolous; *word-pictures*, however meagre; and *comparisons*, however common-place. What magic power “Once upon a time” has over the mind of a little one! Abstract rules and general principles, on the contrary, are positively intolerable. The inference is plain that, in teaching children, illustration must be largely employed, in order to excite their interest and fix their attention.

It is to be feared that many persons, who are



aware of the above fact, somehow or other overlook the inference. Were it otherwise, we could not account for the prevalence of that prosy, unillustrative style so often adopted even by professed instructors of the young. Abstract generalizations too frequently usurp the place of interesting detail and vivid imagery; and this, we firmly believe, is one of the reasons why young persons are not retained for a longer period under Sunday school instruction. The attractions of the class are not sufficiently strong to counterbalance the attractions of worldly pleasure, and the scholar is drawn away into scenes of folly and godlessness, if not of actual vice,—when a different mode of instruction might have restrained his wandering steps, and led him to the love and practice of virtue and religion.

The Sunday school teacher is encouraged to cultivate an illustrative style, not only by principles such as those we have adduced, but also by the concurrent examples of the most successful religious instructors of the young. Examine, for instance, the writings of Todd and Abbott,—the “Lectures to Children,” and “Truth made Simple,” of the former, and the “Young Christian,” “Corner Stone,” and “Way to do Good,” of the latter. If there be

one feature in these works more prominent than the rest, it is the abundance of apt illustration. The same may be said of the more recently published "Addresses to Children," by the Rev. S. G. Green, and the "Fragments from the Great Diamond," by the Rev. James Bolton. Nor is this a mere accident of style; the above writers recommend as well as adopt the practice of careful and constant illustration in the religious instruction of children. The following well-known passage may be regarded as representing the views of all those whose skill and experience in the Sunday school work entitle them to speak with authority on such a subject. "Nothing is easier than to talk to children; but to talk to them as they ought to be talked to, is the very last effort of ability. A man must have a vigorous imagination. He must have extensive knowledge, to call in *illustration* from the four corners of the earth; *for he will make very little progress but by illustration.*"

But the Sunday school teacher has a far higher example of an illustrative style than any furnished by merely human educators. He who "spake as never man spake" was, in the strictest sense of the word, an illustrative teacher. Abstract doctrines and general principles

rarely flowed from his lips, except as embodied in illustrative facts and incidents. He presented to the minds of his hearers no dry skeletons of theology; all was living, moving, breathing truth. The gorgeous blossoms of the scarlet lily, and the glossy plumage of the well-fed ravens, were by him made to teach his disciples lessons of moderation in their care for the future. The sower scattering the precious grain, and the mustard-tree with its feathered inhabitants, furnished emblems of the nature and progress of Messiah's kingdom. The waters of Jacob's well called the attention of the woman of Sychar to the living water, "of which if a man drink, he shall live for ever." And the golden vine which glittered above the doors of the second Temple was made to typify, in a touching manner, the union subsisting between Christ and his people.

So largely, indeed, did our Lord employ *one* form of illustration in his addresses to the multitudes who thronged to hear him, that the evangelist emphatically remarks, "Without a *parable* spake he not unto them."

The force of the Saviour's example in this respect will be even greater if the fact be kept in view, that the relation sustained by him to his disciples, during the period of his earthly

ministry, closely resembled that which now subsists between the Sunday school teacher and his youthful charge.

Every thoughtful reader of the Gospel must have been struck with the really childish simplicity exhibited by the disciples of Christ in reference to spiritual truth, and the extreme difficulty with which their minds seem to have grasped those doctrines which we deem too plain to need any explanation. So dull and ignorant do the first Christian scholars appear in our eyes, that, despite their lowly condition of life, we wonder that their patient Instructor was not oftener led to exclaim, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" The questions they proposed, and the opinions they expressed, were often just such as we should now expect to hear from the lips of a Sunday scholar of average age and intelligence. Nor is the comparison a merely fanciful one. The minds of the disciples were in an immature condition, and possessed but a dim appreciation of spiritual truth, like the minds of the children who ordinarily attend our Sunday schools at the present time. Hence the same mode of instruction would be required in both cases. Let the readers of these pages, therefore, recognize in their Divine Master a model *teacher*, as well

as a model *man*; and strive to become imitators of the Good Shepherd, while leading His lambs into the pastures of heavenly truth.

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## CHAPTER III.

### ON THE USE OF ILLUSTRATION.

HITHERTO we have regarded illustration chiefly as a means of imparting attractiveness to abstract or general truths; but its other uses must not be overlooked. It has an *illuminating* as well as a *decorative* power. An illustration, as the term itself implies, throws light on truth, and aids in the removal of obscurities. It will sometimes happen, as every teacher knows, that in spite of all his efforts to use simple language, his scholars evidently fail to catch his meaning. The idea, so clear to the teacher, is to the pupil hidden, as in a mist. In such an exigency, illustration is imperatively called for, and will, in almost every instance, accomplish the desired object. In the eloquent language of Tupper,—

“Precepts and rules are repulsive to a child, but happy illustration winneth him.

In vain shalt thou preach of industry and prudence, till he learn of the bee and the ant.

Dimly will he think of his soul, till the acorn and the  
chrysalis have taught him ;  
He will fear God in thunder, and worship his loveliness in  
flowers ;  
And parables shall charm his heart, while doctrines seem  
dead mystery."

And further, illustrations are singularly effective as *aids to the memory*. They are to abstract truth what tendrils are to the climbing plant,—giving it a firm hold upon the object with which it is brought into contact.

A recent writer well remarks, "It is of no use denying the fact, but it may do some good to acknowledge it, that the greater portion of every public instructor's remarks—be it from the pulpit, the lecture-room, or the class—is forgotten before the dismissal of the audience. It is an exception to this rule whenever an illustration accompanies the remark. The simile, the anecdote, or the fable, is sure to be remembered ; and the sentiment to which it was linked is obliged to go with it."\*

Illustration, then, has a threefold value. It tends to render truth more attractive in its appearance, more obvious in its meaning, and more lasting in its effects upon the mind. To derive from it, however, all the advantages

\* Blacket's "Young Men's Class," page 117.

which it is capable of affording, requires not a little care and judgment. Illustrations are like locomotive engines, certain to do mischief if not guided aright; and therefore, to be used safely, they must be used with discretion. But the earnest teacher, however inexperienced, need not shrink from attempting an illustrative style; indeed, if he would achieve success, he must make the attempt; only let him remember that in this, as in every other art, skill can be acquired only at an outlay of time and trouble. The following points should be borne in mind:—

1. *There must be something to illustrate.*—This remark may seem very unnecessary; but, unfortunately, the practice of *illustrating nothing* is too common in Sunday schools to be overlooked. Many teachers seek to purchase the forbearance—we will not say the interest—of their scholars during the ordinary exercises of the class, by promising to tell or read a story to them, when the lessons shall have been repeated, and the accompanying *sermon* quietly listened to. That is, the children shall each have a sugar-plum, if they are good, and take their physic without making wry faces. Against such a practice the writer begs to protest, as most mischievous in its tendencies. Among

other evils, it impresses children with the idea that religious teaching is something repulsive, endurable only when quickly followed by a story.

A Sunday school teacher has no right to use illustrations in his class, *except for illustrative purposes*. He fritters away valuable time when he descends to the relation of tales and anecdotes, however good, merely to amuse his scholars and keep them quiet. No doubt he often feels a strong temptation to awaken the interest of the young people by telling them, for instance, all the thrilling details of the great fire in — street; how first the smoke and then the flames burst forth from all parts of the house—how the panes of glass were heard to dash in pieces on the pavement below—how the engines came rattling at full speed along the street—how streams of water were poured into the building—how one little boy was left behind, and everybody thought he would be burnt to death—and how a brave fireman rushed through the flames, and saved the child's life at the risk of his own. All this may prove very attractive, but it is not attractive *teaching*, unless opportunity be taken pointedly to enforce some practical truth deducible from the anecdote, such as, The obligation of children



to love that Saviour who gave his life to rescue them from a more than earthly death. Without the lesson, the story will prove worse than useless, by diverting the attention of the scholars from more important subjects. Nor will its introduction be unobjectionable, unless the doctrine be involved in the subject appointed to be taught. *Concentration* is essential to deep and lasting impression. Let everything be brought to bear upon *one* subject; let each Sabbath's instruction be made to circle round some central theme, as satellites revolve round their primary; then, and only then, will the scholars leave the class, at the close of the exercises, with clear and distinct impressions of what they have been taught.

Illustrations, we repeat, must illustrate *something*, and are allowable only so far as they are *aids* to doctrinal truth; never as *substitutes* for it. They are like condiments, excellent when eaten with more solid food, but quite unfit to be taken in its place.

2. *Illustrations must be made subordinate to the truths illustrated.*—It is not enough that there be viands as well as seasoning; the latter must also be kept in due proportion. It is not enough that there be doctrine and illustration; the latter must be made subordinate to the

former. An illustration misses its mark whenever it withdraws the attention of the hearer from the truth which it illustrates. Just as the splendour of a court adds to the magnificence of its sovereign, so an illustrative anecdote or simile should tend to give prominence and effect to the doctrine or principle with which it is associated.

Some care is therefore needed to prevent the illustration eclipsing the doctrine, and thus becoming a hindrance rather than a help to the teacher. An illustration, to be effective, should be *short, simple, obvious and appropriate*.

It should be *short*. The time which a teacher spends in his class is, at best, but very brief. Now, in order to render his instructions both attractive and useful, he will probably find it necessary to allot to each Sabbath's lesson several illustrations. But children, especially young ones, are fond of minute details; and in seeking to gratify this taste, the teacher must ever keep in view the amount of time at his disposal; or, as is often the case in sermons, he may find, when too late, that his first "head," like Aaron's rod, has swallowed all the rest. Two or three minutes are quite enough even for an anecdote; and lengthened illustrations, however good, had better be avoided.

It should be *simple*. Brevity must not be gained at the expense either of simplicity or attractiveness. Since, therefore, as we have just remarked, children love details, it will be desirable not to make illustrations too terse, especially in teaching junior scholars. In order to afford room for such details, and yet be brief, it will be necessary to choose simple facts for the purposes of illustration. As a rule, anecdotes and narratives, which suggest more than one prominent truth, should be rejected. A complex illustration will be found too unwieldy to be used with success. We may here add that, generally speaking, a *larger* number of *more concise* illustrations should be brought forward in a class of elder children, while a *less* number of *more detailed* illustrations will be preferable for younger scholars.

It should be *obvious*. Let the teacher remember that he has to deal with children, who, though extremely fond of illustrations, are yet able to appreciate only those which are simple and familiar. Therefore let subtle analogies, however exquisite, be discarded in the Sunday school class. It is better to use the tritest similes and the most threadbare anecdotes, than those which, although far superior in themselves, are less likely to be appreciated by the youth-

ful mind. That which the adult would deem common-place, is better than that which the child would find obscure and unintelligible. For instance,—a teacher wishes to impress his class with the thought, that every action they perform will exercise an influence upon their future lives. Two illustrations occur to him. He thinks of the never-to-be-forgotten “circles, made by a stone cast into a pond,” and also of the modern hypothesis, that every sound we utter causes a wave in the surrounding atmosphere, which again produces a second, and this a third, and thus the sound is echoed perpetually through the vast realms of “upper air.” Now, the latter is much superior to the former in point of force and beauty; yet a wise teacher would probably choose the well-worn “stone in a pond” as an illustration more familiar to youthful experience, and, therefore, more likely to be appreciated and remembered. In after life, a pebble casually dropped into the water might recall to the mind of the scholar the remarks which his teacher made and the lesson which he sought to inculcate, many years before.

It should be *appropriate*. The teacher's illustrations are sure to be remembered by his pupils; consequently, such only should be in-

roduced as are worth remembering. Let the illustration be in keeping with the truth which it explains or enforces. Ludicrous incidents should be very rarely used, if at all. Though sometimes pointed and forcible, they are apt to connect themselves so closely with the doctrine which they illustrate, that the one cannot be thought of without the other. Hence a religious truth may constantly suggest ludicrous ideas, which intrude themselves upon the attention when least desired. The safer plan is to avoid such illustrations altogether.

3. *Illustrations should be judiciously distributed.*—By this we mean that they should not be crowded together in any one part of the lesson. We have already alluded to the effect which a story, told at the end of the usual exercises, has upon the attention of a class. The same evil will result if illustrations be lavished upon one part of the subject to the neglect of the remainder. It will be advisable, therefore, for the teacher to make a suitable arrangement of his illustrations when preparing for his class, and to allot to each portion of the lesson its share of illustrative matter. The best mode of making that allotment will form the next subject of inquiry.

## CHAPTER IV.

## HOW TO ILLUSTRATE A LESSON.

SCRIPTURE lessons, as ordinarily taught in Sunday schools, are usually divided into two classes—*doctrinal*, and *narrative*. Of the former, the following, selected from the Union “List of Lessons” for 1855, may be taken as specimens:—“Faith;” “Repentance;” “Sabbath breaking and its consequences;” “We should worship God only.” The “List” for 1858 consists principally of *narrative* lessons. The following are examples:—“The Plagues of Egypt;” “The man who was born blind;” “Gideon and his victories;” “Christ at Jericho;” “The Conquest of Canaan.”

Although there is an apparent difference between these two kinds of subjects, they become in practice almost undistinguishable, as will be seen upon examination. In all cases, a certain portion of Scripture is appointed to be read, and forms the basis of the teacher’s instructions. When the subject is a *doctrinal* or *preceptive* one, the reading lesson is generally intended to be an *illustration* of the doctrine or precept (the purely didactic parts of the Bible being

seldom used for the purpose). For instance, the lesson entitled, "We should worship God only," is illustrated by the passage selected for reading, viz., Joshua xxiv., which contains the charge given by Joshua to the Israelites, in reference to the worship of Jehovah. On the other hand, in a *narrative* or *historical* lesson, the facts comprising the portion of Scripture read become the subject of the lesson,—the teacher being expected to deduce from them such practical truths as he may think they most clearly suggest. For instance, the lesson for February 28th, 1858, is "The Plagues of Egypt," and the passages to be read, Exodus, chapters vii. and x., in which several of those awful visitations are enumerated. A teacher would naturally attempt to draw from the chapters some practical truths, such as "The folly of rebellion against God;" "The dangers of impenitence," &c.

In both cases a portion of Scripture would be read, and one or more practical doctrines deduced from it. The difference between a *doctrinal* and a *narrative* lesson is, therefore, merely nominal. According to the present mode of instruction, the same lesson may belong to either class. A teacher may, for example, read with his scholars the twenty-fourth



chapter of Joshua, and call the lesson either "Joshua's charge to the Israelites," making it *historical*, or "God only is to be worshipped," making it *doctrinal*.

There is, however, another mode of treatment, by which the distinctive features of a doctrinal lesson are preserved, and which, for *senior* classes, is far superior to any other. It must be admitted that this plan is suited chiefly for the instruction of young men and women, or for classes of young people who possess more religious knowledge than ordinary Scripture class scholars. Still the example given at pages 48 and 49, will at least supply the reader with materials for profitable thought.

In framing and illustrating a lesson of the usual kind, viz., a portion of Scripture, teaching one or more important doctrines, it is well to bear in mind certain fundamental principles, simple enough in themselves, but too frequently overlooked.

The proper course of a lesson has been thus tersely described:—"The *beginning* should *arrest the attention*; the *middle* should *inform the mind*; the *end* should *affect the heart*."\* A more extended account would perhaps be somewhat like the following:—

\* Collins's "Teacher's Companion," page 38.



Children are naturally *volatile*. It is difficult to fix their attention, at will, upon a given subject. But they are *curious*, and "curiosity is the mother of attention;" therefore excite the former, and you will gain the latter.

That having been gained, it must be retained by imparting information so as at once to gratify curiosity and excite it. Knowledge, rightly communicated, creates a desire for more.

The minds of children, like their bodies, are *active*;—they will be doing something; and if not engaged upon the lesson, will be occupied with something else. The mind must, therefore, be exercised; the faculties of observation, memory, imagination, and judgment, must be called into action. But the exercise must not be *monotonous*, for children's minds demand variety; nor *protracted*, for they are incapable of long-continued exertion.

Truth having been implanted in the understanding, must now be applied to the feelings. Moral consciousness must be awakened by earnest and tender appeals, and the lesson be concluded by an effort to secure for the doctrines that have been expounded to the mind a permanent lodgment in the heart.

Such, the writer thinks, should be the general course of a Sunday school Scripture lesson.

The place of *illustration* in the lesson may now perhaps be determined. Let us repeat once more the three duties to be performed by the teacher ;—to *gain the attention* ; to *inform the mind* ; to *affect the heart*. Where will illustrations be mostly required ?

For *gaining the attention* of a class of children, a well-chosen illustration may sometimes be used with success. Great care, however, will be needed in making the selection. The fact or anecdote must bear closely upon the lesson which is to follow,—point towards it (so to speak), and tend to awaken an interest in it ; otherwise the illustration will fail to fix the thoughts of the children upon the appointed subject of instruction, and valuable time will be wasted. When the scholars are intelligent, and have been used to the exercise of their mental faculties, it is perhaps better to employ *interrogation* than *illustration* for the preliminary purpose we are now considering, or at least to give prominence to the former. The following observations from Mr. Fitch's admirable tract on "The Art of Questioning"\* deserve the careful consideration of every teacher. Referring to the curiosity, upon the awakening

\* Published by the Sunday School Union.

of which the attention of the learner depends, the writer says:—

“It is chiefly by questions judiciously put to a child before you give him a lesson, that you will be able to kindle this curiosity, to make him feel the need of your instruction, and bring his intellect into a wakeful and teachable condition. Whatever you may have to give in the way of new knowledge will then have a far better chance of being understood and remembered.”

The *mind* has next to be *informed*, and its various powers called into active exercise. The teacher must first ascertain what his pupils already know.

This inquiry may take the form of *recapitulation*; it will thus serve the double purpose of ascertaining what the scholar already knows, and of exciting a desire to learn more. Mr. Fitch remarks:—“If we want to prepare the mind to receive instruction, it is worth while first to find out what is known already, and what foundation or substratum of knowledge there is on which to build; to clear away misapprehensions and obstructions from the mind on which we wish to operate; to excite curiosity and interest on the part of the learners as to the subject which it is intended to teach.”

“You may take it,” he adds, “as a rule in teaching, that the mind always refuses to receive—certainly to retain—any isolated knowledge. We remember only those facts and principles which link themselves with what we knew before, or with what we hope to know, or are likely to want hereafter. Try, therefore, to establish in every case a logical connection between what you teach, and what your pupils knew before. Make your new information a sort of development of the old, the expansion of some germ of thought or inquiry which lay hid in the child’s mind before. Seek to bring to light what your pupil already possesses, and you will then always see your way more clearly to a proper adaptation of your teaching to his needs.”

Then follows *explanation*. Here, again, interrogation should form the groundwork, no mode of teaching being so well calculated to promote mental activity. Since, however, *all* that the teacher desires to communicate cannot be taught by questioning *only*, but more or less of truth will have to be directly imparted, such didactic instruction may be advantageously assisted by illustration. For reasons before stated, more of illustration will be needed when the truths so imparted are of a doctrinal character, than when they are simply facts.

Lastly, the pupil has to be examined in what he has learned, and the practical truths which have been lodged in the understanding are to be again brought forward, and *applied* to the *conscience*. For this purpose, illustrations will be found singularly useful. Not only will they cast additional light upon the meaning of doctrines already elicited from the portion of Scripture read, they will also impart to them an interest which, in their abstract form, they would never possess; fix them in the memory of the pupil by linking them to concrete facts; and by embodying them in living incident, or striking simile, convey them with tenfold power to the heart.

A specimen of a lesson, constructed in accordance with the above principles, is now appended, not as a model, but as an *illustration*; one example of such a plan being clearer than repeated descriptions.

*Subject*—THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

Acts ix. 1—9.

*Divisions.*

1. Introduction (*illustrative* and *interrogative*).
2. Recapitulation (*interrogative*).

3. Explanation (*interrogative and illustrative*).

4. Examination and application (*interrogative, exhortatory, and illustrative*.)

### *Introduction.*

Have you ever read the "Pilgrim's Progress?" *Yes.* Do you remember the account of Christian coming to the foot of the hill Difficulty? *Yes.* There were two other pilgrims with him,—what were their names? (A pause.) I think you will find that their names were Formality and Hypocrisy, and that they arrived at the foot of the hill about the same time as Christian. What kind of a path was the one which led up the hill? *Hard, rough, difficult.* What other paths were there? *Two; one on each side of the hill.* Which path did Christian take? *The middle one.* And the other pilgrims? *One took the right hand path, and the other the left.* Yes; and both perished in consequence.

Now you see that the hill Difficulty was the *turning point* in the history of Formality and Hypocrisy. They had been journeying on with Christian before, but now they had to make their choice. They chose wrong paths, and you know what were the consequences.

Although the "Pilgrim's Progress" is only a story, yet it represents what is true. It has been said that there is a turning point in the life of every man,—a time when he makes his choice between God and the world. I know that it is very often so, and our lesson to-day is about the turning point in the career of one of the greatest men that ever lived. I mean the Apostle Paul. Let us turn to the account, Acts, chapter ix., verses 1 to 9. (Read the lesson.)

*Recapitulation.*

To whom does our lesson chiefly relate? *To the Apostle Paul.* By what name is he called? *Saul.* Have we read of him in previous chapters or not? *Yes.* How often! *Twice.* What was the first occasion? *The stoning of Stephen.* What had Saul to do with that? *He stood close by. He kept the clothes of the men who stoned Stephen.* Then how did Saul regard Stephen's death? *He was glad of it.* How do you think God regarded it? *As a great crime; as very wicked.* What crime would you call it? *Murder.* Yes; the first time we meet with Saul we find him sanctioning the murder of a holy and innocent man. What is the next account of him? *"As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering*

*into every house, and haling men and w  
committed them to prison."* Mark the progress of sin. First, Saul stands by while others persecute; next he becomes a persecutor himself. What will be the third step in wickedness? Let us examine the passage before us.

*Explanation.\**

There are in these nine verses three things to be noticed:—

1. What Saul prepared to do. Verses 1 and 2.

2. The vision he saw. Verses 3 to 5.

3. The effects produced. Verses 6 to 9.

1. *What Saul prepared to do.* Read the first two verses. Where did we last meet with Saul? Refer again to chap. viii. 3. Where did the occurrences mentioned in these two verses take place? Perhaps we can find out by looking at the passage more carefully. To whom did Saul go? What was the duty of a high priest? Where? Can you tell me where the high priest lived? See Matt. xxvi. 3. Then it seems likely that this took place at Jerusalem.

\* The questions introduced into this section are intended merely as an *outline* of the catechetical exercise which might be adopted. The answers supposed to be given by the class have been omitted, in order that the subsequent illustrations might be inserted in full.



In what temper of mind was Saul? What do you understand by "breathing out threatenings and slaughter?" What is implied by the word "yet?" Yes; Saul was still what he had been before; teaching us this lesson, that a persecuting spirit never dies out of itself. For what did he apply to the high priest? Letters from whom? From the high priest only? Read Paul's own account of the matter, in chap. xxii. 5. They were letters from the Jewish *Sanhedrim*, which Paul calls "the estate of the elders," and of which you read in the gospels under the name of "the council." It was the great council of the Jews, where persons who had committed crimes were judged. It was composed of the Chief Priests, the leading men, or Elders, and the Scribes, or teachers of the law. The high priest was president, and so Saul went to him to obtain letters from the council. To what place were these letters to be sent? How far was Damascus from Jerusalem? It was about 120 miles. In what direction? Yes, north-east. To whom, in Damascus, were the letters addressed? What were the synagogues? Yes; *places*, not persons. To what *persons* were they sent? Look again at chap. xxii. 5. Well, these "brethren" were the "rulers of the syna-

gogues" of Damascus, — learned and moral men, of mature age, who managed the affairs of the synagogues, and had the power of passing judgment on persons who committed slight offences. Who was to take these letters to Damascus? What was his object in going there? How would such letters help Saul in gaining his ends? Yes; if the leading men of the synagogues sanctioned his proceedings, and assisted him, he would have little difficulty in carrying out his persecuting designs.

We now see what young Saul prepared to do. Notice particularly the spirit he displayed. How spitefully and yet how coolly he lays his plans! and how carefully he provides against any interference with the execution of them! Under a show of authority, he will seize good men, and even weak and delicate women are to be torn from their homes and families, and dragged to prison, perhaps even death, at Jerusalem. Saul had grown clever in wickedness. How solemn the lesson,—that evil passions are ever growing stronger and stronger!

2. *The vision he saw.* There is an old proverb which says, "Man proposeth, God disposeth." We have seen what Saul proposed, let us now see how God disposed. Read verses 3 to 6. In what direction did you say Da-

damascus lay from Jerusalem? At what distance? Of what country was Damascus the chief city? Yes; and in situation it was one of the most beautiful in Syria. Let us imagine we are companions of Saul in this journey. Approaching Damascus, we catch sight of a magnificent plain, covered with fruit trees, and more than fifty miles in circumference. There are the walnut tree, the olive, the fig, the apple, the citron, the pear, the pomegranate, and many others, in all their varied shades of green, brown, and yellow. A silver stream winds through the plain, and beyond is the city of Damascus, with its white-roofed houses, its walls, and its towers; while a sky of cloudless blue above, and the brilliant rays of an Eastern sun, complete the loveliness of the scene. But Saul has no eye for the beauties of nature now. The mind of that young Jew is full of fierce and cruel thoughts, and his heart beats high with fanatical zeal. He is resolved to crush the despised followers of Jesus, and to root out their religion from the earth. Such are his feelings as he draws nigh to the beautiful Syrian city.

And now what happened to him? What kind of light was it that burst forth upon him? Read what Paul himself says about it (chap. xxvi. 13). Yes; it was "above the brightness

of the sun." Is the sun brighter in Syria than it is in England, or not? At what time of the day is the light of the sun most powerful? And what time did Saul see this light? (chap. xxvi. 13.) And yet it was brighter than the noonday sun in Syria! What was the first effect of this light upon Saul? Were his companions struck down, or not? (chap. xxvi. 14.) What caused them to fall? Yes; they were dazzled. You know that when a strong light is suddenly cast upon our eyes, the effect is very painful. We instantly close them, and shrink from the light. No wonder that Saul and his attendants fell to the ground when "a light from heaven" shone round them. I think Saul saw more than a light. Read what he told the Jews, chap. xxii. 14. What followed the light? Whose voice? What did Jesus say? Whom had Saul been persecuting? Then what do you think the Saviour meant by saying "*persecutest me?*" Yes; it showed that Jesus so loved His people as to feel for them in all their troubles, and considers all that is done to them as done even to Himself. How, then, should we act towards the disciples of the Saviour? However poor and humble they may be, they are subjects of the King of kings.

What was Saul's answer to this awful sum-

mons? Why did he ask, "Who art thou?" If he did not know who had spoken to him, why did he say "Lord?" It was a title of respect. Read Matt. xv. 22, 25, 27; Acts x. 4. Perhaps Saul thought of the appearance of the "angel of the Lord" in patriarchal times; or perhaps Stephen's dying words rang in his ears,—“I see the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” How did the Saviour reply? Why did he speak of Saul's persecution of Him again? What is meant by “hard to kick against the pricks?” In Eastern countries, cattle were driven with goads or “pricks,” consisting of long poles, each tipped with a sharp spike of iron. By kicking against such an instrument, a restive ox would not gain its own purpose, but would only wound its limbs against the spike. What did Jesus mean to teach Saul? Yes; that to oppose Him was madness and folly. Let us never dare to resist the Lord.

3. *The effects produced.* Read verses 6 to 9. How did Saul feel when he learned who was speaking to him? Why was he afraid? Sin makes men cowards. Give examples from Scripture. Why was Saul astonished? What did he suppose had become of Jesus of Nazareth? Yes; Saul thought Jesus was an im-

postor, who had been dead some two years. He now found, to his horror and amazement, that this same Jesus was a Being of Divine power and majesty. As soon as Saul was convinced of this truth, what did he say? What did that question prove, as to the state of Saul's mind? How wonderful the change! Only a few moments before, Saul was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the disciples of Jesus. Now, convinced of his wickedness, humbled to the very dust, he lies trembling at the Saviour's feet, and asks, "What wilt thou have me to do?"

What do we learn from this as to Christ's power? Yes; that He can change the hardest heart. Let us pray that our hearts may be changed.

How did Jesus answer him? What city? Our Lord seems to have said more than is recorded here. Read chap. xxvi. 16—18. Why did not Jesus say anything more about Saul's acts of persecution? Do you think Christ had forgiven him already? What makes you think so? Then what does this passage teach us about Jesus? Yes; that if we submit to Him, He will pardon us, although, like Saul, we have rebelled against Him.

What effect had this miracle on Saul's com-

panions? Why did they not see Jesus? He appears to whom He will, and in what way He pleases. The ordinary means of conversion is preaching; and these men would have many opportunities of hearing Saul preach, if they chose to listen. Although they neither saw Jesus, nor understood His voice, (chap. xxii. 9,) but only saw a great light, and heard sounds, yet that was quite enough to lead them to ask what the vision meant. But it is not said that they did so. From this we learn an important lesson,—that to see and fear God's power is no proof of a changed heart.

What effect had the vision on Saul's *body*? Where did he go? How did he find the way? Instead of entering Damascus in state, as a proud leader of persecutors, he is led by his servants through the gate into the city,—a blind, humbled, repentant man. How long did his blindness last? Do you think it was a benefit or an evil? What good would he be likely to receive from it? How did he spend those three days? How was it, do you think, that he went without food? Can you tell me what proofs Saul gave of a real change of heart? What a man *does*, shows best what he *thinks* and *feels*. As Jesus said, "the tree is known by its fruits." If our hearts have been given



to God, we shall show it by our daily actions. A changed heart produces a changed life. Are we "bringing forth good fruit?"

4. *Examination and application.*

(*The foregoing lesson is to be briefly recapitulated, and the scholars examined by individual questioning, on what they have learned. The chief doctrines are thus to be brought prominently forward in succession, illustrated, as far as time will permit, and each applied, by a few words of earnest exhortation, to the hearts of the scholars.*)

*Doctrine.*—Evil passions ever grow stronger and stronger (ver. 1, 2).

*Illustration.*—Some few years ago, a noble steamer, moored in one of the harbours of the United States, was discovered to be on fire. The engines were instantly started, and the prow of the vessel directed to the shore. But the flames soon rendered the helm useless, and such of the crew as were on board were obliged to jump into the small boat, and leave the steamer to her fate. Soon the engines worked more fiercely; the wheels revolved with fearful speed, and hurried the vessel through the waters. The sight was terrible. At last came one tremendous shock, and all was darkness and ruin. Such is man, when seized by an evil passion, whether the spirit of pride, or of envy, or, as in Saul's case, of persecution. He grows worse and worse, and is hurried along, unless God interpose, to eternal ruin!



*Doctrine.*—Injury to Christ's people is injury to Him (ver. 4, 5).

*Illustration.*—Parable of the last judgment (Matt. xxv. 41—45).

*Doctrine.*—The folly of opposing Christ (ver. 5.)

*Illustration.*—I dare say you have heard of the sword-fish; it is a very curious creature, with a long bony beak, or sword, projecting from the front of its head. It is also very fierce, attacking the fish that come in its way, and trying to pierce them with its sword. The fish has sometimes been known to dart at a ship in full sail, with such violence as to pierce the solid timbers. But what has happened? The silly fish has been killed outright by the force of its own blow! The ship sails on just as before, and the angry sword-fish falls a victim to its own fierceness. How shall we describe the folly of those who, like Saul, oppose the cause of Christ? They cannot succeed,—they only work their own destruction.

*Doctrine.*—Christ can change the hardest heart (ver. 6).

*Illustration.*—A man once went to a place of worship, where that holy and eloquent minister, George Whitefield, was preaching. He took with him a great stone, that he might dash it at the head of the preacher. As the sermon went on, the truth spoken reached the ruffian's conscience. He dropped the stone, and after the service went to Mr. Whitefield, and said, with tears, "Sir, I came here to break your head, but God, through your preaching, has given me a broken heart." The man became an eminent Christian.

*Doctrine.*—Submission to Christ will ensure his forgiveness (ver. 6).

*Illustration.*—The prisoners going into the presence of Emmanuel. (Bunyan's "*Holy War*," chap. viii.)

*Doctrine.*—To fear God's power is not conversion (ver. 7).

*Illustration.*—Ahab's repentance (1 Kings xxi., 27—29).

*Doctrine.*—A changed heart produces a changed life (ver. 8, 9).

*Illustration.*—Thomas Olivers, who wrote those beautiful hymns—"Lo! He comes with clouds descending," and "The God of Abram praise," was, in his younger days, a most wicked and dishonest man. He was brought to see his sin and danger, and became a changed character. About that time he had some property left him. He bought a horse, visited every person whom he had defrauded, paid every farthing that he owed, with interest, and asked pardon of all whom he had wronged. Thus a real change of heart is seen in a change of life.

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We now subjoin an outline of a *doctrinal* lesson, arranged upon the plan alluded to in a former page. It is extracted from Mr. Blacket's valuable manual, "*The Young Men's Class*." The course pursued will be best described in the author's own words.

The chapter having been read, "the teacher opened by some close and pointed remarks,

before prepared, with a view to arrest attention. He then proposed to the class a series of questions, usually extending to eight, as that number was found to suit the allotted time, and also to exhaust the theme. These questions were advanced one by one, leading on the class gradually to the development of the most prominent propositions included in the subject."

The teacher wisely reserved himself, until the replies of the class to each of the questions proposed had been fully made. "Then, when enough had been said, or too much—as many things were sure to be spoken sadly erroneous—he himself would strike in to correct mistakes, commend the observations that were judicious, and adjust such sentiments as had clashed. That done, he would wind up the whole with some reflection arising naturally from the question at first asked. . . . Into this short but premeditated speech he would usually weave some illustration,—piece of poetry, tale, or other interesting matter, to give it pungency and force. This occasion, occurring at eight intervals, afforded the best opportunity ever got, to stimulate, arouse, reprove, exhort, or impress the class."

*Subject*—FALSEHOOD.

*(To each question are appended the ideas which the teacher expected or wished to be introduced.)*

1. What are the different classes of falsehood?

Unintentional untruths—Lies—Prevarication—Equivocation—Duplicity—Treachery. (*Explain each.*)

*Observation.*—Degree does not affect criminality.

*Illustration.*—Eve and the forbidden fruit.

2. What proves falsehood vicious?

The ninth commandment—Ditto expanded on the principle of the Sermon on the mount—The damage done—What is not wilful is not criminal.

*Observation.*—Not to gloss over the guilt by the name of stratagem.

*Illustration.*—The boy Papirius in the Roman Senate (No. 173).\*

3. Is the tendency natural to man?

What learnt from the conduct of childhood—Truth a rarity—What learnt from heathen practices.

*Observation.*—What dishonour has the fall brought upon man!

*Illustration.*—Lines from Young, Night i. 68, 'How poor, how rich,' &c.

\* These figures refer to a MS. collection of illustrations. See p. 68.

#### 4. What instructive cases of falsehood are there in the Bible?

Jacob—Spies—Gehazi—Ananias and Sapphira—Joseph and his brethren—Peter.

*Observation.*—The better the character the greater the sin.

*Illustration.*—Telemachus' remark on punishment of hypocrites in hell (No. 978).

#### 5. Are falsehoods justifiable for good purposes?

Case, as for instance:—Fallacious arguments in debate—Assumed sanctity for an example—False miracles for conviction—False news to relieve the aching heart—False return to income tax for credit.

*Observation.*—Gospel morality higher than human maxims.

*Illustration.*—Opinions of Platonists and Pythagoreans (No. 729).

#### 6. What is the best way to get over a falsehood?

Add lie to lie?—Swear to it?—Get into a rage?—Bribe?—Confess it?

*Observation.*—We should pass through life on the principle that all we do is seen.

*Illustration.*—The gentleman's glass windows (No. 253).

#### 7. What are its common effects?

To pollute the mind of the liar—To harden his heart—To disturb his conscience—To draw on punishment

*Observation.*—Wickedness swells by practice.

*Illustration.*—Romans' bloody games (No. 618).

### 8. How does the Gospel rectify the habit?

By its direct precepts—By its restraints—By its gracious assistance.

*Observation.*—A Christian's principles make him quick to detect and avoid iniquity.

*Illustration.*—The hen and the fox (No. 787).

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that scholars should be encouraged to supply Scripture illustrations of doctrinal truth, as well as to deduce doctrines from Scripture facts.

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## CHAPTER V

### ON THE SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATION.

THE inquiry will perhaps now be made, Whence are suitable illustrations to be obtained? How shall the teacher acquire a store sufficient to supply the returning demands of each successive Sunday, seeing that illustrations, like "spirits from the vasty deep," are by no means certain to come when called for?

We freely grant that these aids to teaching, in common with all else that is worth gaining, must be sought for ere they can be found. They will not spring, ready made, from the

teacher's brain, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter; and whatever Aladdin might accomplish by rubbing his wonderful lamp, the treasure-houses of illustration are not to be entered by rubs of the forehead on a Saturday night, when the morrow's subject is looked at, perhaps, for the first time. Illustrations must, like good fruit, be gathered in their season, and "preserved" for future use. We shall first endeavour to point out some of the localities where they may be found in the greatest abundance, and then offer a few hints on the gathering of them.

The principal sources of illustration may be thus classified:—Similes and Metaphors; Proverbs and Wise Sayings; Daily Life; History and Biography; Manners and Customs; the Sciences; the Arts; Fiction; Poetry.

1. *Similes and Metaphors*, although the simplest form of illustration, may be rendered both forcible and attractive. The Scriptures abound in figurative language, and it will be well for the Sunday school teacher frequently to draw from the sacred volume, as well as from his own resources, comparisons and metaphors for the elucidation and adornment of doctrinal truth. For example, he may say, "How short and uncertain is life, even at the best! 'As

for man,' says the inspired Psalmist, 'his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.' " Or again, "My dear children, put your whole trust in the Saviour. Faith in Him will be a shield to guard you from the darts of the tempter; a sun to brighten life's journey; a staff to support your declining years: and a pillow for your dying-bed. Closely connected with the above are—

2. *Proverbs and Wise Sayings*.—Many of these are couched in figurative language. The value of proverbs has been attested by the highest authority, in the insertion of the Proverbs of Solomon in the sacred canon. Teachers will do well to commit to memory the best of those which they meet with from time to time, carefully avoiding such as are vulgar or obscure. Besides the proverbs and comparisons of the Old Testament, he may enrich his stores from the "Proverbial Philosophy" of Tupper, and Trench's "Lessons in Proverbs." A series of articles on the same subject appeared in the "Saturday Magazine" some years ago; and Mr. Bohn has lately published a "Handbook of Proverbs," containing many words of wisdom. Several papers on "Proverbs" have also appeared in the "Leisure Hour."

The wise sayings of distinguished men are



also valuable. Take, for instance, the following:—"Do not think," the teacher may say, "that religion is a thing of gloom. It was a fine remark of the great composer Haydn, when asked why his church music was so cheerful,—‘I cannot make it otherwise; I write according to the thoughts I feel. When I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy, that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen.’"

3. *Daily Life*.—The events of daily life, both public and private, form illustrations which are both simple and striking. A battle, a shipwreck, a railway accident, a fire, a commercial failure, a public festival, a praiseworthy action, a notorious crime, and even the less prominent occurrences which form the ordinary experience of individuals, will prove important aids in the inculcation of moral and spiritual truth.

The writer once heard a teacher employ the following illustration of our Lord's sentiment, "No man can serve two masters:"—"The other day," said he, "I saw two men walking along the street together, and a little dog was running behind them. So they went on for a while, till they came to the corner of a street, where they shook hands, and went opposite ways. Then I saw at once to which of them

the little dog belonged; he could not follow both, so he trotted after his master. So, dear children, is it with you. You may try to be Christ's servants and the servants of Satan at the same time; but it will be of no use. You must follow either the one or the other: like the little dog, you cannot follow both, for they go opposite ways." This style of illustration is particularly useful in the instruction of younger scholars.

4. *History and Biography* form a storehouse to which the teacher must constantly resort. In Scripture narratives he possesses a never-failing source of illustration. "It is perfectly astonishing," says Mr. Blacket, "to what an extent the sacred volume contains tales adapted to this object. A diligent investigator, sitting down deliberately to arrange biblical illustrations, might, with tolerable ease, compile a perfect set, fit for the elucidation and enforcement of all divine truths. The book of Genesis is crowded with them, and they are abundant in most of the books which narrate the history of the Jewish people." Our conviction is, that teachers are but very imperfectly acquainted with the narrative portions of Scripture, particularly those of the Old Testament, or so rich a mine of illustra-

tion would be more thoroughly worked. Bible facts should be continually adduced to enforce Bible precepts, and elucidate Bible sentiments. How can the sin of covetousness in its various phases be more powerfully exemplified than in the stories of Achan, Naboth, Gehazi, and Judas? What plainer instances of the nature of a propitiation can be found than in the presents given by Jacob to Esau, and by Abigail to David? And how can the change involved in conversion be more clearly set forth than in St. Paul's account of his journey to Damascus?

In Nicholls's "Help to Reading the Bible," many excellent examples are given of the manner in which Scripture doctrines may thus be illustrated by reference to Scripture history.

But profane history must not be neglected. Independently of its importance as a subject of study, it will prove a valuable help to the teacher who uses it aright. The history of our race in all ages and in every land, is rich in illustrations of moral truth. Such a work as Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," or Hume's "History," may thus be made subservient to the propagation of that faith which its author would fain have destroyed. The annals of Greece and Rome will supply an abundance of important lessons for the Sunday school class. The story

of Curtius leaping into the gulf at Rome is a fine illustration of His love "who gave Himself for us;" while the folly of delay in accepting the divine offers of salvation might be pointed out by reference to the legend of King Tarquin and the Sybil, in some such mode as the following: "Let me entreat you, dear young friends, to accept, without a moment's delay, the salvation which God so graciously offers you in Jesus Christ. Hesitation is not only dangerous, but foolish in the extreme. If God is willing to make you happy, what madness to defer that happiness till by and by! There is a story of an ancient king of Rome, to whom a woman came and offered him nine books, which contained, it was said, prophecies of all that was to happen to the Roman nation. The price she asked was three hundred pieces of gold. The king refused to give so much. The woman then went away, burned three of the books, came back again, and asked the same price for the remaining six. The king refused; three more of the books were burnt, and the three now left were again offered to him for three hundred pieces of gold. Astonished at such conduct, the monarch paid the sum demanded. 'What folly!' you say. 'Why did he not buy the books at first?' Folly, indeed,

but not so great as the folly of those who put off religion until they grow older. Why, they might have a *whole life* of true happiness, but they prefer only *a part*; they wait until it is almost too late, so far as this world is concerned, to enjoy God's love and favour at all. Be wise in time, and seek the Lord, ere the golden season of youth has passed away for ever."

There are few biographies of real merit from which a careful reader may not glean some illustrations of doctrinal truth. The following may serve as specimens:—Plutarch's "Lives;" Fenelon's "Lives of the Ancient Philosophers;" Craik's "Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties;" Myers's "Lectures on Great Men;" the late Hugh Miller's Autobiography; and the recently published memoirs of Dr. Kitto and George Stephenson.

Biographical illustrations, however, will be most readily obtained in the form of *anecdote*. Here the only difficulty will lie in making a selection.

The best collection we know of is the "Cyclopædia of Moral and Religious Anecdote," edited by Dr. Cheever, and recently published by Griffin and Co. The subjects illustrated are arranged in alphabetical order, and a list of

Scripture Texts, elucidated or confirmed by the anecdotes, is prefixed for easy reference. There is also a companion "Cyclopædia of Literary and Scientific Anecdote," which may also be made available for purposes of illustration.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### ON THE SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATION (*concluded.*)

5. *Manners and Customs* must not be overlooked by him who is in search of illustrations. Beside imparting useful information, they are well adapted to enforce the precepts of Scripture. For instance, the teacher is desirous of impressing upon the minds of his class the necessity and importance of being early prepared for death. He says:—"When we think how slender is the thread of life, how soon and how suddenly it may be snapped asunder, surely it ought to be our first, our earnest care, to prepare for the great change which awaits us all! Let us draw a lesson from the conduct of the ancient Egyptians. Each king, we are told, as soon as he came to the throne, began to prepare his own sepulchre, regarding this world as but a wayside inn, at which the traveller to another

state of being was to stay for a little while. And shall we, dear young friends, with the light of the Gospel beaming upon us, neglect to prepare for eternity? Let us not be satisfied until we can say with the apostle, 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'"

This kind of illustration, as our readers will remember, occurs in one of the outline lessons already given.

Information on the subject of Eastern manners and customs may be obtained from Paxton's "Illustrations of Scripture," vols. 3 and 4; Callaway's "Oriental Observations;" Jamieson's "Eastern Manners;" and Burder's "Oriental Customs." For the manners and customs of ancient nations generally, Rollin's "Ancient History" may be advantageously consulted.

6. *The Sciences*.—In these we have an inexhaustible fund of illustrations, which it were the greatest folly to neglect. Although even the dry facts of mathematics may occasionally throw light upon a moral truth, yet the physical sciences are, of course, the richest in analogies. A botanist or zoölogist will never be at a loss for illustrations; and perhaps it is not too much to affirm, that the teacher who desires to excel in the mode of instruction we are considering, must become, in some degree at least, a



Christian philosopher. At any rate a general acquaintance with the facts of natural science, will be found a most valuable accomplishment, if only for the sake of the illustrations which it will suggest to its possessor. The example of the Great Teacher, who so often drew a moral from natural phenomena, should also prove a stimulus to the acquisition of this branch of knowledge, independently of its intrinsic worth and interest. Let us take a few examples.

*Zoölogy* must have the first place. Suppose the teacher is desirous of enforcing the duty of a firm, unshakable adherence to the truth. He may say:—"Let us take a walk on the sea shore. Do you see that round, pointed pyramid of shell, resting on yonder rock? That is the house of the limpet; the animal is inside. Try to lift up the shell. In vain—you cannot move it. Use all your force—it is of no avail. So closely does the limpet cling to the rock, that although you may break the shell, you cannot remove it from its place. Learn a lesson from this little creature. Cling closely to the rock of *right*; let every attempt to withdraw you from it only make your grasp more firm and resolute, and suffer anything, yea, death itself, rather than lose your hold."

*Botany* may next be named. The reader's



of Dr. Todd's "Lectures" will not fail to remember the use which he makes of the lily as an emblem of the Christian; while the wheat and tares, the vine and fig-tree, of our blessed Lord, are objects familiar to the mental eye of every Sunday school teacher. The cedar, wide-spreading, and of all but eternal duration,—the oak, a monarch, yet of ignoble birth,—the rose, fragrant even in decay,—the reed, yielding, yet unbroken,—the fly-trap, alluring only to destroy,—all these, if wisely used, may be made powerful means of instilling truth and enforcing duty.

*Astronomy* will be found of great value in illustrating the unsearchableness of God, or the mysteries of revelation. For instance, the teacher may say, "My dear children, the power and greatness of God are subjects far above our comprehension. Do you wonder at this? Gaze up at yon glorious sun. Those bright rays which dazzle your sight have been traveling at the rate of nearly two hundred thousand miles in a moment of time. That has been proved; yet who can understand such amazing speed? Not one of us. Yet light is but the handiwork of Jehovah; how, then, can we hope 'by searching, to find out God,' or comprehend His infinite greatness?" So, again :—You say

that there are difficulties in the Bible, which you cannot explain. True ; but how many difficulties are there in God's other book—the book of creation ! You cannot explain how yonder silver-shining moon is kept in its appointed path, never turning aside, but circling continually round our earth. Yet you know that it really does this. And so the Bible has its mysteries ; if it had not, it would not be like the other works of God.”

*Chymistry*, with its thousand metamorphoses, may be made the vehicle of important teachings. Suppose that the importance of those every-day occurrences, which are often termed trifles, is the truth sought to be impressed on the minds of a class of Sunday scholars. The following illustration may be used :—“I fear you too often forget how great an influence the *little occurrences* of each day have over your thoughts and dispositions. They are ever acting upon you, either for good or for evil. Chymists tell us that a single grain of the substance called *iodine* will impart color to 7,000 times its weight of water. It is so in the higher affairs of life. One companion, one book, one habit, may affect the whole life and character. Be ever watchful, lest your hearts become tinged with evil when you least expect it.”

Geology, anatomy, physiology, mechanics, physical geography,—in short, the whole circle of the sciences, may in like manner be made available for the illustration of moral and spiritual doctrine. The books consulted should be of a popular and elementary kind, as such will usually be found to contain the largest number of illustrative facts. Of course we do not mean to advocate a smattering of scientific knowledge; we simply wish to show that for the one particular purpose now being considered, profound treatises will generally prove less suitable than works of a simpler character. In natural history, for example, such books as Mr. Gosse's "Text-Book of Zoölogy; Mrs. Wright's "What is a Bird?" and "Observing Eye;" Rev. C. Williams's "Art and Nature," "Silver-shell," and "World of Waters;" and Kirby's "Plants of the Land and Water," although written for juveniles, will yield an abundance of illustrations. Lardner's "Museum of Science and Art" is a cheap and valuable series of treatises on natural science.

7. *The Arts*.—Both the fine and the useful arts are eminently suggestive. The works of the painter, sculptor, and architect; the marvels of photography; the curious details of manufacturing processes; the varied operations

of agriculture ; the magnetic telegraph ; the steam engine ; and even the commonest products of human skill and ingenuity, are full of lessons for the thoughtful mind. Take, for instance, the daguerreotype, which can be employed to illustrate many spiritual truths. The teacher observes :—“ However painful the troubles and afflictions of this life may be, we know that they are sent for our good ; and it is quite certain that, if rightly improved, they will render us holier, and therefore happier, although, as the Bible says, they at first ‘ seem grievous.’ You have often seen a daguerreotype portrait, and, I dare say, have admired its wonderful accuracy. How faithful is the copy ! every feature, every line of the original, has been portrayed on the surface of the polished metal. Much of that strange process was carried on *in the dark*. The portrait was drawn in a darkened box ; then carried into a darkened room, and hidden from the daylight, until each part of the image grew clear and perfect. So, dear children, if God places us in the dark chamber of affliction, it is that we may become more like Him—that He may impress His own image more plainly on our hearts and lives.”

8. *Fiction*.—Under this head we include allegories, parables, tales, legends, and fables ;

sources of illustration which should by no means be neglected. The inimitable allegories of Bunyan will afford a never-failing supply of striking emblems, while in the discourses of our Lord will be found the best examples of parabolic illustration. Tales must be but sparingly resorted to, even though they may present right views of truth; as such illustrations are mostly of too diffuse a kind to be generally useful. Fables and legends are preferable, being striking yet not deceptive. Mr. Blacket recommends the use of Oriental fables; but such, though excellent, are not accessible to the majority of Sunday school teachers. The "Flowers of Fable" is a collection within the reach of all.

Such a fable as the following might be used to show the folly of youthful boasting:—

"A gourd wound itself round a lofty palm, and in a few weeks climbed to its very top.

'How old may'st thou be?' asked the new comer.

'About a hundred years.'

'About a hundred years, and no taller! Only look, I have grown as tall as you in fewer days than you count years.'

'I know that well,' replied the palm: 'every summer of my life a gourd has climbed up

around me, as proud as thou art, and as short-lived as thou wilt be.' ”

9. *Poetry*.—The employment of poetic quotations in religious teaching is, happily, too common a practice to need enforcing here. In Sunday school instruction, devotional poetry should be frequently introduced. Let our readers try the plan, and they will find that even in a few simple stanzas there lies a power both to arrest the attention and to affect the heart.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### ON COLLECTING ILLUSTRATIONS—CONCLUDING HINTS.

HAVING dwelt at some length upon the sources whence illustrations may be obtained, the modes of collecting and preserving them must be briefly referred to.

For collecting illustrations, the teacher will need an observant eye, an attentive ear, an active mind, and a heart thoroughly devoted to its work. We have pointed him to a few isolated spots, but his field of illustration is the wide world. Earth, air, and sea, we are told

by naturalists, teem with living creatures; the observant teacher will find them as rich in illustrations of moral truth. A lesson, as well as an insect, lurks in each flower, and under every stone; but diligent search alone will find it. The teacher must ever wear, as a French writer says, his "Sunday school spectacles," and view all things through a Sunday school medium. He must continually put to himself the question he so often proposes to his youthful pupils, "What may be learned from that?"

His ear must be open to catch the illustrative sayings of those with whom he is thrown into contact in the course of his daily engagements. The anecdote, proverb, or quotation, casually mentioned in friendly chat, and even the street talk of passers-by, may be made available to "point a moral" in the Sunday school class. How strikingly such phrases and remarks were seized and turned to practical account by the lamented "Old Humphrey," our readers will not need to be informed.

In the foregoing chapter, books of various kinds have been recommended as containing illustrative facts and incidents. The teacher must in an especial manner read with his "Sunday school spectacles" on. Each book he peruses should be made to contribute to his stock



of illustrations, while some works—a collection of anecdotes, for instance, or Bunyan's Allegories—may be read for that specific purpose. Newspapers and magazines should be examined with the same end in view. A certain preacher was asked “where he got his sermons from?” “Out of the newspapers,” was the brief rejoinder. Let Sunday school teachers take the hint.

By adopting such means as those we have enumerated, a large store of valuable illustrations will speedily be acquired. Suitable provision must, therefore, be made for retaining them. They must be committed to paper in as full a manner as time will permit, yet as concisely as may be consistent with perspicuity. Mr. Blacket advises that the teacher “should procure a few blank volumes, and keep one by him in every hour of reading; and whenever a tale, or anecdote, or pleasing fact in natural history crosses him, he should enter it in short, with the sentiment or sentiments it seems naturally to illustrate, prefixed, or put legibly at the top,” and inserted in an index at the end of the book. Illustrations picked up “by the way-side” may be jotted down immediately, either in the pocket-book or on a slip of paper; and afterwards copied into one of the blank volumes, with their appropriate titles.

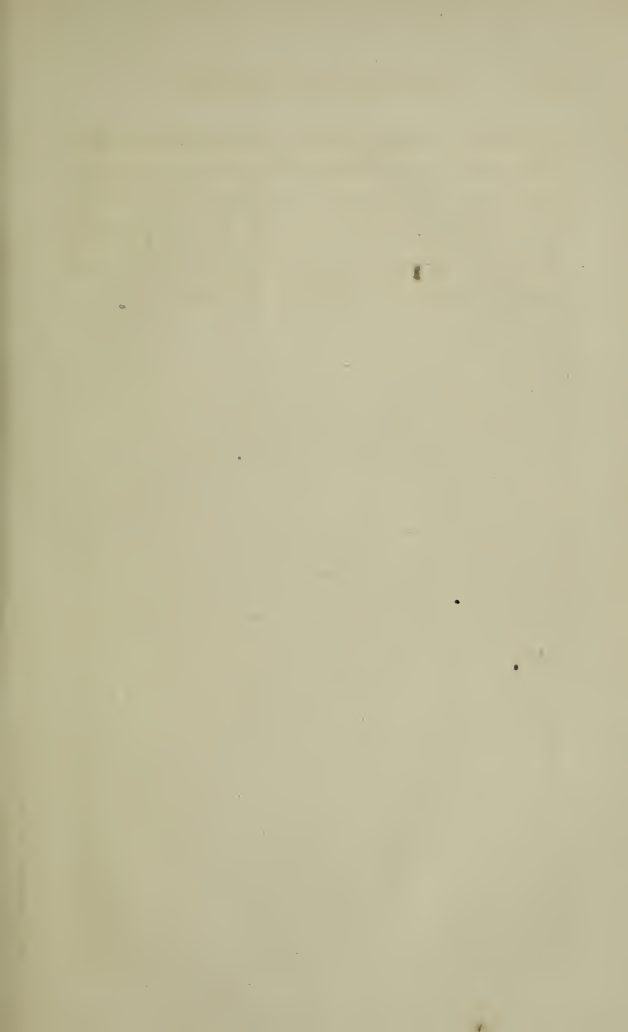


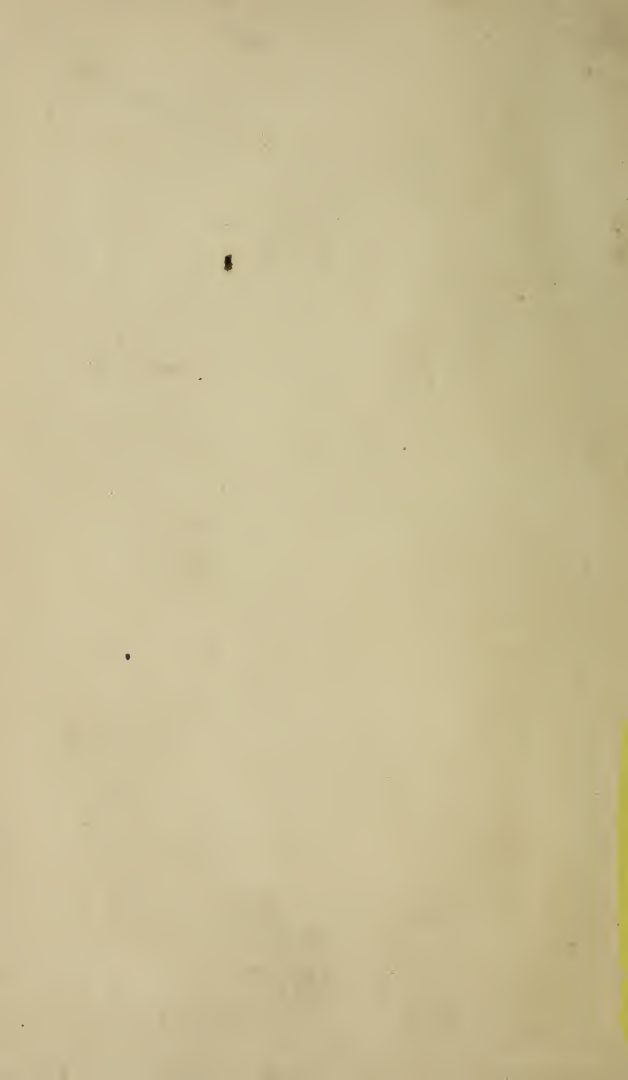
In choosing illustrations, the teacher must seek to exercise a wise discrimination, in order that they may be so adjusted, both in quantity and quality; as to secure the object for which they are introduced.

When using them in the class, he must be lively and pointed in his manner, striving to cast around the anecdote or comparison as much of interest and vivacity as possible. Much advantage may be gained by presenting incidents in the *dramatic* form, instead of narrating them in the ordinary manner. This cannot be done in every case, but when the word-picture is skilfully drawn, the impression made upon the memory of the hearer is likely to be deep and lasting. This mode is admirably explained and exemplified in Abbott's "Way to do good," and also in Stow's "Bible Emblems," a little book of great excellence.

Finally, let the teacher remember, that although the *conversion* of his scholars can be accomplished by Divine agency alone, it is for him to win their affections, captivate their tastes, inform their minds, convince their judgments, and impress their consciences. This is his work; and for its right performance he is responsible. With a deep sense of that responsibility, let him diligently employ every means

to qualify himself for his momentous duties. To earnest prayer let him unite earnest labour; deeming no task too arduous and no sacrifice too great, to secure for each of his youthful charge an interest in the great salvation, and a place among the children of God.













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